

State Best Practices Improving Food Stamp Program Access

United States Department of Agriculture
Food and Nutrition Service
August 2000

June 2002 Updates 

Food Stamp Program Access State Best Practices

Questions and comments about this publication may be directed to:

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Introduction

The Food Stamp Program (FSP) mission to ensure that all Americans have access to a healthy, nutritious diet requires that the Program be operated in an effective and efficient manner. To help accomplish this mission, the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is committed to work in partnership with States to improve customer service in the FSP.

In recent years, participation in food stamps has decreased dramatically. Families who remain eligible for benefits may be leaving the program due to barriers such as a lack of information or receipt of conflicting information concerning their continued eligibility. In order to help improve participation in the FSP, FNS has published guides that focus on improving access to the FSP for the elderly and disabled and working families. They are the “The Nutrition Safety Net, Help for the Elderly and Disabled”, published February, 2000, and it’s companion piece called “The Nutrition Safety Net, At Work for Families: A Primer for Enhancing the Nutrition Safety Net for Workers and Their Children, published July 14, 1999. (see www.fns.usda.gov)

In Fiscal Year 1999, FNS began conducting Program access reviews of all States to determine whether State and/or local office policies and procedures served to discourage households and individuals from applying for FSP benefits. Regional Offices (ROs) conducted the reviews to identify customer access problems and identify practices that improve customer service. While this report describes some of those practices, sufficient, well-trained and attentive workers that are open to resolving customer access problems or potential barriers to the FSP are the central criteria for improving program access. Each entry in this report contains a brief description of the initiative and includes the name and telephone number of the State contact listed in the event the reader would like more information about a particular initiative.

If you are aware of practices that contribute to customer service that other States might benefit from, please contact FNS at the following address:

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